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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 955
ABSENTEE BALLOT REQUESTS, DELIVERY, AND MARKING**

February 16, 2021

Get Money Out (GMOM) is an all-volunteer organization that was established just over seven years ago. We now have more than 9,000 citizen supporters. We work in Maryland toward the goals that all citizens should have equal access to the ballot and an equal say in governance.

The integrity of elections must be of paramount concern to State government. Cynicism about government and elections is already rampant for a variety of reasons. In 2018 North Carolina suffered major absentee ballot fraud perpetrated by low-tech means, but this bill wisely protects against high-tech, high volume threats.

Maryland has a vulnerability in allowing any voter to request and mark an absentee ballot online. Hackers who have gathered information on hundreds of millions of people by breaking into Equifax, Marriott, or any other data aggregator have all the information they need to request your absentee ballot and mark it online. If a major actor in an election were to perpetrate such large-scale fraud, they could target a group of voters in a primary or general election in order to tip the election to a favored candidate or ballot issue. It would happen fast and without warning. You could lose your vote.

Under HB 955, in order to receive an absent ballot or mark a ballot over the Internet, a voter would have to be 1) a military service member assigned abroad or 2) a disabled or other voter who cannot vote except by Internet ballot. Restricting access to Internet ballots to a limited population should greatly reduce risk of automated attacks by bad actors using stolen identities.

We well understand the Committee's general reluctance to act when a vulnerability is theoretical and has not occurred in actual practice. However, in this case, the consequences of a large-scale occurrence would be quite severe – requiring a repeat election and further eroding public confidence in our democracy. We urge you to follow the advice of election security experts and to fill this gap before a disastrous incident occurs. Please issue a favorable report on House Bill 955.